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Contents

	Page
Comparing Calvinist And Social Gospel Ethics	257
Repetition Of Reward Offered	258
Christian Ethics Versus A "Higher" Doctrine	259
Freedom Is Not Possible Except Under Laissez-Faire Capitalism	262
Why Are People Poor?	266
What Is The Character Of "Capital," Something Which God Did Not Create?	275
God Did Not Make The World Good, As Some People Understand "Good"	285
If You Were Robinson Crusoe, What Would You Choose To Salvage?	287

Comparing Calvinist And Social Gospel Ethics

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is a publication in the field of ethics, and naturally it has an interest in the question whether Calvinist ethics and social gospel ethics are identical, or if not identical whether they are reconcilable. We therefore make inquiry about anything that may have been published by a Calvinist, *comparing* Calvinist ethics with social gospel ethics, or *contrasting* Calvinist ethics with social gospel ethics.

Any reader who can inform us of anything published not only by a Calvinist but also by a social gospeller outlining the

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harmony or disharmony between the two ethics (Calvinist and social gospel) will be of substantial assistance to us and we shall appreciate hearing from him.

We do not limit this inquiry to the United States, but extend it to England, the Continent and everywhere else.

Do Calvinist ethics and social gospel ethics compare or differ?

fn

Repetition Of Reward Offered

In the June 1957 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, page 162, we informed readers that we were interested in the *logical* argument of Calvinists against the doctrine of Karl Marx and other socialist-communists in regard to the *private* ownership of property and what goes along with it, namely, unearned income.

Rodbertus, Marx, Lassalle and other socialist-communists really put the "axe to the tree" as far as Christian ethics are concerned. They developed what they consider a logical argument against any man having property of his own or any unearned income from it—rent, interest, dividends, profits.

There had been, up to the time of the socialist-communists mentioned, a "logical" argument (or rather arguments) in favor of private ownership and unearned income. They were arguments which everybody accepted, including businessmen, the churches, philosophers and all the rest. The socialists did a good job showing that those "logical" arguments in favor of private ownership of capital and income on that capital had a palpable error or errors in them. They showed that the old "logic" defending capitalism was wrong.

Having pretty well liquidated the arguments in favor of capitalism and the traditional Christian viewpoint that it was moral to own capital privately, they came up with their own solution to the relations of men to men, namely, *only* public or communal ownership of property, and *no unearned income to anybody.*

Has that socialist-communist argument ever been answered logically by a Calvinist? If so, we would like to know about it, and shall be glad to pay $100 for the information. fn

Christian Ethics Versus A "Higher" Doctrine

Christianity, historically speaking, in the field of ethics has taught the following.

1. *Love* means (1) not to harm the neighbor and (2) to allow him liberty. Consider Romans 13:10 by the Apostle Paul which defines *love* in its basic sense: "Love worketh *no ill to the neighbor*" (our italics). In this expression, the full sweep of the Mosaic Law in its negative aspects (which the Apostle Paul had previously summarized in paragraph nine) is perfectly expressed. The corollary to this negative formulation of the law is that the neighbor is entitled to his liberty; another man may not coerce him. Consider what Paul wrote elsewhere about liberty.

Unfortunately, defining the law *only* in terms of not harming the neighbor and in terms of liberty leaves three bad "open spots." Over the succeeding fourteen centuries after Moses these "open spots" played havoc with the law of Moses.

2. The first open spot was that, as defined, namely, Love worketh no ill to the neighbor, it was interpreted to cover only *initial* action; that is, *my* conduct when I first meet my neighbor; I might not in that circumstance *on my own initiative,* injure him, "work him *ill.*" But suppose he injures me! What then? The law of Moses was interpreted by those who came after him to mean: if a neighbor first injures me, I am no longer under obligation "to work him no ill"; *then* I can avenge myself. Fourteen centuries after Moses, Christ corrected this interpretation. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ declared that you still must not "work ill to the neighbor" if he first injures you. Christ merely made the law of Moses cover a man's conduct *after* he had been injured by another as well as *before* he has been injured by another. The Sermon on the Mount teaches the corrective that was needed; we must be *forbearing and forgiving.* That is part of the law.

3. The second open spot that is left by Paul's formulation of the law, Love worketh no ill to the neighbor, is what can happen although you do not injure the neighbor when you meet him, and he does not injure you either. It could be argued then that everything is perfect and nothing more is required. However,

that lacks realism. The character of creation (the cosmology of the world) is that the "sun shines and the rain falls on the good and the evil," that is, the natural forces of the world are not differentiated in their consequences. When a hurricane hits Jones, or a drouth makes Brown poor, or when ideal weather makes Smith rich, or when Johnson is a highly-talented person—all these things in the "natural world" can help or injure a person. We can respond to such situations by shrugging our shoulders and saying, I have not injured my neighbor and I admit he has not injured me, and I can see that he is in trouble but that is *his* problem; let him worry about it and solve it. That attitude will not do. We owe help to our neighbors when they are in genuine emergencies. We must show what Scripture defines as *charity*. That must be part of the Mosaic Law of Love. The Samaritan who "fell among thieves" must be helped. Of course, a Samaritan not in such or similar predicament does not need to be helped. Scripture has specified a standard measure of required charity—a tithe, a tenth. Some may consider the percentage too high or too low, but that is the standard percentage given. Probably the percentage is inappropriate under certain circumstances; in catastrophies it is probably too low; if the government has undertaken progressive taxation and also the functions of a so-called "welfare state," the percentage is probably too high.

4. There is a third open spot in the definition of love when it is summarized as Love worketh no ill to the neighbor, namely, it undertakes no responsibility to help the neighbor "get his thinking straight." If a neighbor is injuring himself by unsound ideas, it is inexcusable to let him plunge himself into ruin without warning him. Machiavelli somewhere tells of a king who was on a ruinous course. Kings do not always like to be reprimanded or corrected and their courtiers know that. This king had a counsellor who fully realized the folly of the course the king was following, but the man said nothing. Eventually, one day out in the field the consequences of the king's folly became evident to the king himself, and he began talking out loud of the collossal mistake he had made. Then the timid counsellor was unwise enough to speak up and agree with the king's conclusion; the counsellor indicated that he had known all along that the king was horribly wrong. The king asked him: "You knew all this

time that I was making a mistake, and you did not warn me?" The counsellor, boasting about his foresight, admitted just that. The king then calmly instructed his bodyguard to take the counsellor out and execute him. That ought to be done to all of us who (1) do the neighbor no ill; (2) are forbearing and forgiving; (3) show charity, *but* (4) do not endeavor to warn and assist a neighbor by straightening out his thinking (without coercing him). This last "open spot" is known among Christians as "preaching the gospel." As sometimes defined it does not mean *generally* helping the neighbor in his thinking, but helping the neighbor *only in his thinking about a future life after death.* In some mission enterprises the gospel is practically limited to that. There is a faction in the Christian Reformed church which declares that the church as a *church* should restrict its activities to helping men *only* in the field of religion. Anything outside of that specific field is considered to be outside the field of the church. Practical brotherly love does not end with correcting the thinking of another only in regard to heaven and hell but not regarding other matters in life.*

* * *

The foregoing scriptural definition of neighborly love is *revolutionarily* different from that given by the social gospel, or as incorporated in the practical programs of some "Calvinists" as, for example, the planks in the political platform of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands.

What does the social gospel do with the doctrine of neighborly love? It does not teach the Biblical doctrine of neighborly love outlined in the foregoing? It teaches love as being *agape,* one of the Greek words for love; it gives to *agape* a special meaning which requires much more than that which was outlined in the foregoing; it teaches the fantastic, sanctimonious doctrine that we are our "brother's keeper." We are told that we must, as if we had the power and love of God himself, take care of our neighbor far better than God in His providence undertook to do. We are, according to this spurious religion, to out-do God.

*We are not here defining the whole idea of salvation by grace. The great content of that idea will be well known to many of our readers. The definition given in the foregoing emphasizes certain aspects of every man's obligation to be a good neighbor in *this* life, in all its *practical* aspects.

In the foregoing comment our emphasis is on the *ethical* part of the *Biblical* gospel. The *ethical* part of the *social* gospel is not reconcilable with the ethics which we have just outlined. We ask this question: Where in publications circulating in the Christian Reformed church is an ethical (social) doctrine taught which is unqualifiedly different from, hostile to and irreconcilable with the *social* part of the social gospel?

We are against the ethics of the social gospel in the *unorthodox* churches, and we are equally against the ethics of the social gospel when they are taught in the *orthodox* churches, in which in fact the *ethics* of the social gospel are more prevalent than are the true ethics of the scriptural gospel. fn

(Note: For a much more extensive treatment of neighborly love, see Volume I of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM pages 28 to 144.)

Freedom Is Not Possible Except Under Laissez-Faire Capitalism

Capitalism is the economic system which is based on the *private* ownership of capital, especially the private ownership of what are known as the "means of production"—land, factories, stores, warehouses, machinery, transportation facilities, etc.

Freedom cannot continue to exist except under capitalism. Freedom cannot continue to exist under either socialism (communism) or under interventionism. The reason for this will not be obvious to all readers, at least it was not obvious to us for a long time.

Assume socialism exists. Nobody then owns private property, at least not factories, machinery, and other "means of production." Under that system neither you nor I will be owning a printing press. The government will own all printing presses, all magazines, all newspapers, and will own every means available for publishing all news. Nobody can *as an individual,* publish any printed matter. Everything is printed "by the government" because the government owns all the printing plants.

Suppose someone wishes to criticize an act of the existing socialist government. Will the socialist government permit him

to use *its* presses to spread criticism of what the government is doing? There is as much prospect of the government permitting you to use its presses to criticize the government as there is prospect that it will permit you to use its Internal Revenue Bureau to lower your taxes. The government controls the Internal Revenue Bureau, and that means that you do not control it, and that you cannot use the Internal Revenue Bureau against the government. Similarly, it is silly to believe that the bureaucrats running all the printing plants of the country (they are the *planners,* you know) will be willing to give you the printing facilities of the country in order to criticize the government or its "plans." The "plans" of the bureaucrats under socialism-communism do not include your criticisms, nor do those "plans" provide for assisting you to criticize and interfere with *their* plans..

Of course, the foregoing does not prove that liberty is not possible under socialism-communism. It only proves that freedom of the press is not possible under socialism-communism. The problem shifts then to this form: Is liberty possible if there is no freedom of the press?

The answer is *No.*

We are all creatures of what we read and hear. Will Rogers once declared humorously that the only thing he knew was what he had read in the newspapers. But in a real sense that is true of all of us. If a government controls all the avenues of news, can suppress this, can emphasize that, and if nobody is authorized to tell about the "other side" of various issues, what chance is there of anyone retaining real *independence* of judgment. Everybody's judgment under those circumstances will really be controlled by the people who control what does or does not come to our attention. Our minds will be fed by the government as young birds are fed by whatever their parents bring them. Young birds in a nest have no choice what worms they are going to eat; neither do the citizens of a government which is socialist-communist, which owns all printing presses and all other methods of communication.

But our position is stronger; we declare that "Freedom is not possible *except under capitalism.*" By capitalism we mean *laissez-faire capitalism* and not interventionism (*dirigisme*). Readers

will remember that we dissent from the idea that interventionism is a subgroup under capitalism (see June 1957 issue, p. 165ff.). Capitalism is not really of two kinds—free market (laissez faire) capitalism, or interventionist capitalism. That is the method of classification which interventionists seek to establish. They wish to be known as capitalists, but only as *interventionist* capitalists. However, the principles of interventionism are not reconcilable with capitalism and interventionism will not permit the continuance of freedom; only free-market (laissez-faire) capitalism will.

To declare a government may intervene—interfere, meddle—in an otherwise free market—and that is exactly what interventionism does—is to declare a principle that the government may also interfere with the freedom of the press. The case is not so direct nor the effect so obvious, nor prompt, nor severe as when a government *owns* the presses. But anyone who espouses the principle that a government may at its pleasure *intervene* in the ownership of capital and the activities pertaining to capital automatically espouses the principle that sooner or later, openly or secretly, directly or indirectly, the government can interfere with any criticism of governmental or nongovernmental activities. It may not at once send the police over to your printing plant. But you may be harassed on taxes. Or you may find your reporters do not get passports easily in order to be foreign correspondents. Government news which is given to "favorable" newspapers is not given so early to you. You may get less police protection in a labor strike. If on the other hand you are hand-in-glove with the interventionist government in power, your path is easy: everybody knows you "stand well." People solicit you for help in the government departments; because you can help them, they cater to you and you have profit from that. You hear of "deals" by means of which money can be made; you learn early when contracts are to be let. Your reporters get favorable and special treatment over all the rest, or at least compared with reporters working for critical newspapers. Can news any longer be reliable, under the circumstances?

Consider Washington, D. C. Suppose you wished to put out a critical, anti-administration newspaper in Washington. Would there be much prospect of success? It may be doubted. Washington is largely occupied by bureaucrats. Would they be willing to

subscribe to a paper critical of their conduct of affairs? To ask the question is to have the answer. In great bureaucratic centers a free, a really *free,* press is more or less out of the question. If such a news agency does not have many local subscriptions, it cannot get the local advertising.

Some of the leading columnists in the country constantly have inside and early information. How do they usually get it? They play footsie with the bureaucrats in Washington. They do not report unfavorable matters about those persons in the bureaucracy who can be and are their special sources of information. As a reward they get advance inside information. Thus they can become *"famous"* columnists. But the foundation on which this is built is unsound. It is a combination in which the columnist helps protect and promote the bureaucrat, and the bureaucrat gives special favors to the columnist.

This has already gone so far in the United States that few newspapers in this country are still really free—*independent* in their selection, reporting and interpreting of the news. (As an illustration of an exception the *Chicago Tribune* may be mentioned. Those who have long read it, generally accept it. But someone who has been accustomed to reading a Washington or a New York newspaper will usually be astonished and angry when he reads the *Chicago Tribune.* Such readers have been so "conditioned" by newspapers no longer really independent because of expanding interventionism, that they cannot accept a different viewpoint.)

It is amusing—and tragic—to see how the European papers and citizens naively accept the slant given by the New York and Washington papers as being "the truth" for affairs in this country, not realizing that they are not getting an *objective* picture of the facts hardly better than if those papers were basically government owned.

Of course there is still considerable independence left *legally.* But that does not guarantee that there is much independence left *actually.* A free press is not necessarily *free* when it is merely legally free, or when it *thinks* it is still free even though the principle source of its information is a single, potentially menacing source, namely the government.

In exact proportion as interventionism expands, the press will continue to lose its *real* (as distinguished from its *legal*) freedom. When affairs are concentrated more in Washington than ever before, all newspapers of the country will be proportionately more dependent on the bureaucrats in Washington. Obviously, the course for the typical newspaper to follow will be to curry favor from the bureaucrats in order to get news and favors.

We are reminded of a remark we have heard about the great New York bankers. They were once relatively independent. But in the great changes that followed the depression in the early 1930s, their source of profit and direction shifted significantly to Washington. The big bankers knew on which side their bread was buttered and that bureaucrats and not the free market were piping the tune. Washington was henceforth to be much more important for them. And they turned to Washington as consistently as a sunflower plant turns to the sun.

Similarly, newspapers today generally turn to Washington with equal submission and tractability. They are no longer today a *reliable* source of information simply because they too are heavily dependent on favors from Washington, Washington having the power because it has become interventionist.

Why Are People Poor?

The Question Or Problem

Why are people poor?

We might ask the question differently, namely, why does not everybody have everything that he wants? But in that form the question does not sound so challenging and so harsh. It appears desirable to retain the question as we have asked it: Why are people *poor?*

Most of the people of the world *are* poor. Consider the Russians and their satellite peoples; consider the Negroes in Africa; consider the Hindus and the Chinese. We have mentioned the serious and prominent cases.

"Poverty" exists even in America. Consider a young man 27 years old with a wife and two children. He may have "nothing." If something goes wrong, he will be "up against it." In a sense, nearly all young people are poor. The young are the "have-nots." In some respects the "social question," the question at issue between socialism and capitalism, is an issue between young people and old people; most of the world's capital is owned by people who are middle-aged or old.

When we ask why are so many people genuinely poor, and why does everybody have a shortage of something, we can blame:

1. God, if we believe He exists:

2. The *natural* world as it exists, ignoring God as its Creator; that is, we blame Providence or "Nature";

3. Our fellow men, individually and collectively;

4. Ourselves;

5. The system under which men endeavor to cooperate, something that is given a name such as capitalism or socialism.

God, Providence, others, ourselves, or the "system" must be the cause individually or collectively as to why people are tragically poor. Which of these shall we blame?

God As The Reason Why People Are Poor

In deference to God we might eliminate Him from the list of those potentially responsible. He is declared in Scripture to have made the world "good." But the first man, Adam, representing the whole human race, is said to have sinned promptly and by that sin to have dislocated the whole natural order so that now nature is unfriendly, unresponsive, niggardly, harsh, cruel.

We do not believe that that is the correct view of "nature"—something made good by God but damaged by man.

Indeed, it is clear that Scripture declares, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17). But that curse has, according to the same Scripture, been cancelled; in Genesis 8:21b and 22 we read (God speaking):

> . . . I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

The teaching is plain that the earth is no longer "cursed" for man's sins. Those sins are alleged to continue, but at the same time it is said: "I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake." The implication is that the *natural* (nonhuman) world will be a good place in which to live, that is, it will be viewed as a good place in which to live, if it is viewed correctly; or more accurately, if it is viewed as God is alleged to see it. The laws of nature are declared to be stabilized and trustworthy and *not* cursed. Holding naively to Scripture, as we do, we begin with the premise that God expects us to consider this *present* world to be a good world in regard to its natural (nonhuman) characteristics.

Does it then follow, because the natural world is good or at least no longer cursed, that poverty is not caused by God, as the creator of the universe?

Although it is true that the original natural world was described as "good"; although there was at least a specific curse on Adam's sin; although there was a general lifting after the Flood of any curse that existed; and although the world is now very habitable—does that give a guarantee to any man against poverty? Did God undertake, by his original creation or by lifting a curse from it, to guarantee every man everything he needed—that is, that nobody could or would suffer poverty?

It is unrealistic to look at nature and man in that way. It is really equivalent to saying that man never needed to do anything for his own existence, because the moment that it is admitted that it must be necessary to do *some* work, the question of the amount of work, or the intensity of work, cannot be escaped.

Adam, we are told, was placed in the Euphrates valley, which has as good river bottom land as the world has anywhere. He is said to have been placed in a "garden of Eden" which had many good food-bearing trees. But before he had ever sinned he was

put to work. He was supposed to "dress the trees." Maybe he worked, as Upton Sinclair says it will be necessary to work under socialism, for *only one* hour a day.

But suppose that there had been no sin. Suppose that Adam and his descendants had then fully populated the Garden of Eden? Suppose that some of his descendants were forced to move out for space reasons. Where would they go? They could go east into the Persian Gulf and drown; they could go south into the dreary wastes of the Arabian Desert and starve; they could go north and west into higher and rougher terrain and finally into the mountains. Every mile they moved away, the fertility of the land and the circumstances favorable for easy living would be reduced. We ask: even if Adam and Eve could get along in the "Garden of Eden" on one hour's labor when they had no children to support, (1) how many hours labor might he have had to work to support eight children under working age; (2) would Eve have had to work only one hour a day when she had eight small children; (3) were women only and not men destined to work more than one hour a day; (4) as their descendants moved to less fertile terrain, how many hours a day would they have had to work? Only *one?*

Farming *conditions* certainly have an effect on how much labor a man must put forth to earn his subsistence. Good land, good weather, good seed, good implements can make farming reasonably easy, but those conditions did not in our opinion all exist everywhere in the world when man was created. It is our belief that the world was then as varied as it is now; some land was good, some was bad; some climate was good, some was bad; some species of crops were good, others were poor; and in the beginning man had no tools—no *capital*—whatever. Such very probably being the case, the world if it had become populated by sinless people just could not be a place with no work, nor even easy and limited work, nor identical ease (or severity) of work everywhere. A mental reconstruction of conditions in those days can bring one to only one conclusion, namely, man was not born only to live and to die, but he was also born to *work*. The most imaginative human mind existing cannot logically construct a utopian world that was so "good" that there would be no necessity for painful and sustained work.

We regret to note that it is possible for people to have a combination of naive ideas, not one of which appears reasonable and which collectively gives a wholly erroneous view of how the natural world is put together. This combination, which we consider substantially unrealistic, is as follows: (1) God made the world "good" in the sense that the whole world was a "Garden of Eden," a paradise; (2) Adam did not have to do real or genuinely hard work before he "fell"; (3) that work before he fell was pure pleasure, and never pain, and never had to be severe or prolonged and wearying; (4) that if Adam had never "fallen" he nor his descendants could possibly have had any economic problems; everything would be available in bountiful quantities despite the number of people on this finite world; (5) that it would have been impossible for the population to have increased so that there was overpopulation, and that consequently there could have never been any poverty, for the reason that there were too many people per square mile.

We would strike out every one of the foregoing propositions as unacceptable. (We are not here talking about the adverse effect of man's sins on the existence of poverty and the necessity of work. Sin undoubtedly aggravated the problem, and made it much worse.)

But the idea that the necessity for painful work, and the existence of poverty would have been completely impossible if Adam had not sinned is an infralapsarian view.* It assumes an extreme utopian view of the original natural order. The supralapsarian view removes the difficulty; it says: God created the world so that the natural order was fitted to a finite, short-lived and sinful man. From the beginning of human existence it was about as it is now.

How, in fact, does Scripture generally view the natural order? In a terrified manner? In a whimpering, whining manner? Does it describe the natural order as evil, cruel or unfair?

What must always be considered to be astonishing is the cheerful, favorable and confident manner in which Scripture views "nature."

*In regard to infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism see May 1957 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 142 ff.

The *wild* aspects of nature are not interpreted as being terrifying and menacing and evil, but as circumstances justifying awe toward the Creator of such events.

The *favorable* aspects of nature are joyfully and gratefully admitted: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Psalm after psalm, prophet after prophet, poets and singers all join in praise of the goodness of God *in nature.*

It was, we have concluded, a necessity for the writers in Scripture to view nature in that light. It would have been a gross inconsistency to view God as a personal and beneficent Being, daily governing the universe, but nevertheless having made the earth a *bad* place in which to live. The inconsistency would have been glaring.

We come then to these conclusions. God made a world in which poverty was a possibility if not a probability. He made the world, too, to have characteristics which would probably require sustained and painful labor by man. Further, God did not originally create a miraculous world, which suddenly and stunningly changed into a bad environment after Adam fell; our world today is substantially the same kind of world that Adam first knew. If those ideas point to God as *one* of the causes why men must work hard, we are not disturbed by that. Why should we be? Scripture declares that God himself works continuously and momentarily sustains all things. If God is active, why should not man be required to be active?

The fact is that the human mind cannot construct a consistent picture of any kind of a world other than the one we know. All utopian constructions develop absurdities which make them irrational.

It is a mistake for the Christian religion to engage in fanciful constructions of the natural world before Adam fell. To do so alienates many people from being willing to hear the rest of the Hebrew-Christian view of life. Man, finite of mind and body, will do well to refuse to make any utopian constructions of the world before Adam fell. Scripture makes none; why should we?

The foregoing conclusion is a moderate one which Christians will generally find acceptable. An important conclusion which must

be reached goes further. That conclusion is that Adam as created was himself poor; he had to be poor, and was both before and after the Fall; that his immediate descendants, Fall or no Fall, had to be poor and were. *As created, neither man nor his descendants could be comfortable nor free of poverty.*

It is therefore, necessary to pose the question: How may it be known that God made Adam abjectly poor; and how may it be known that Adam had to work hard?

What Is The Character Of Any Primitive Society?

Eighty years ago the writer's mother's father and kin moved from central Wisconsin to northwestern Iowa. Northwestern Iowa was then a practically trackless prairie; only two farmhouses stood on a nine mile road between two straggling, frontier towns. As far as the eye could see there was an endless rolling prairie, of which the sod had never been turned by a plow.

The way to look at the state of Iowa is that it is misnamed. It is, from a *farming standpoint,* the paradise of the world, and might be named not Iowa, but Paradise. There is some reason to believe that neither the Euphrates nor Nile valleys equals Iowa in productivity nor favorableness for making a living (except that the Iowa winters are colder).

When the first immigrants came into northwestern Iowa, a potential agricultural paradise, did they have a wonderfully easy existence? Was there no poverty, and was no painful or sustained work necessary? What are the facts?

The first house that these particular settlers lived in was a sod hut. It does not sound comfortable. The first fuel that they used in order to keep warm was dried cow dung. It does not sound like ideal fuel.

Anybody motoring through Iowa today will marvel at the beautiful fields, the good roads, the handsome farm places, the pleasant towns. Iowa is today a much better place in which to live than it was 80 years ago. Why is Iowa today a so much better place to live than it was three-quarters of a century ago? Those who ascribe unfavorable *natural* conditions to sin and favorable

natural conditions to virtue will have to have recourse to the absurd idea that the unfavorable conditions in Iowa 80 years ago were because of sin, and the favorable conditions today are because of virtue and the general disappearance of sin. It is ridiculous.

Granting that the inhabitants in Iowa live better today than their ancestors did 80 years ago, what were conditions during the time between the first settlers and the present occupants? The condition was one of *steady improvement.* The new settlers did not live long in a sod hut, nor long burn cow dung for fuel. After some time they built a frame house and burned coal. They bought machinery; fenced their fields, etc. There are obvious conclusions from all this: (1) a new community is *always poor;* (2) it almost immediately gets better; (3) eventually it may be very good.

That is exactly, we believe, what happened in Adam's case, except that his position was worse. The new settlers in Iowa in the nineteenth century at least were not naked. They had clothes. They had a carload of livestock and implements.

Bare nature no matter how good, and bare man no matter how perfect, do not add up to prosperity. They add up, generally, to urgent wants, the necessity of hard labor, and a meagre income, in short, poverty. The sum of man and nature, both in the raw, no matter how favorable nature may be or how strong the muscles of man may be, is a very small sum. Thank God we now have more than the sum of those two things.

Iowa did not give its early settlers prosperity. The Garden of Eden did not give Adam an "abundant life." Natural resources *alone* have never made any one rich. The muscles and brains of men applied directly to the acquisition of consumption goods, have *never* made man comfortable and much less rich. To be a pioneer, a newcomer, is to be poor.

Now that is the way God made man, according to Moses; naked, poor, inexperienced, unsafe. Adam should, in fact, be compared to the Indians who were still in northwestern Iowa in the 1860's and 1870's. The new settlers were tillers of the soil and herdsmen. That is a big advance over roaming bands of Indians. The Indians tilled nothing. They were only hunters and fishers. They had to roam because they merely consumed what nature

naturally produced. They did not help nature to increase its productivity in any significant way by tilling, planting and harvesting crops, or tending livestock. Adam was at the very lowest level, a berry and apple picker. He roamed from tree to tree and bush to bush, as Indians moved from territory to territory, to obtain buffalo meat or from creek to creek to get fish. In fact, Adam's position was worse than that of the American Indian.

In regard to Adam what are the propositions in harmony with both Scripture and common sense?

Proposition		Answers
1. Adam was	rich	*No*
	poor	*Yes*
2. Adam was	informed	*No*
	ignorant	*Yes*
3. Adam was	intelligent	*Yes*
	unintelligent	*No*
4. Adam had	to work hard	*Yes*
	easy work	*No*
5. The Garden of Eden was	a favorable place to survive	*Yes*
	not a favorable place to survive	*No*
6. Adam knew clearly all morality and all the commandments		*Not specified in Genesis*

(According to Genesis, he was *told* of one commandment at the beginning, namely, that he was not to steal, God reserving title (ownership) of one tree in the Garden of Eden.)

As an intelligent creature Adam, although ignorant, had a collossal problem relative to the rest of the natural world around him. That "world" of animals and plants was not a *rational* world. The animals were not rational and did not "cooperate" together but preyed on each other. If man was to be different, he would have to operate by different laws than lions or rabbits or cows. One of those different laws was individual possession of things under certain conditions. Man was told what was the most obvious requirement he should comply with, namely, private ownership of things, and about the first thing he did was to flout the instruction, even when under no compulsion to do so, because it is

explicitly indicated that the human food supply in the Garden of Eden was ample for two persons. It is as if Adam deliberately said to himself: Maybe there is more than enough to eat but I will take anything I covet and want. I do not intend to let anyone else have something for himself only. I am bound by no law. I shall do what I please. If anyone else has something, I will take it if it pleases me to do so.

The Absence Of Capital

God created Adam poor because God omitted something from Creation. God created a great and wonderful natural world and a highly intelligent human being with brawn, powers of observation and reasoning, but an essential ingredient God left out, if man was to be prosperous and not poor. The ingredient that God left out was "capital."

In what follows we propose to show that when God did not create "capital" He destined man to (at least *temporary*) poverty and to hard work.

In the sense of the following explanation, God is the original cause of men being poor and being destined to sustained and even painful labor.

The question is: what is *capital* in the sense of the word as it is here used? fn

What Is The Character Of "Capital," Something Which God Did Not Create?

The bluntness with which we have described how poor Adam was when he was created, and the reason we have given for Adam's pre-Fall poverty, namely, that God did not create "capital" but only *nature* and *man,* is justified because it will arouse interest in what "capital" is—the something which was a great omission from creation.

The use of the word *omission* is not intended to imply that God made a mistake in not creating "capital." "Capital," it will

be discovered from what follows, by its very definition was something not created. Man had to work before there could be "capital." And man had to be poor until he had developed some "capital."

Our proposition is that God made (1) nature and (2) men (these two alone and without the help of capital) such that they were and are unable to provide men with comfort, luxuries or high earthly prosperity.

The word "capital" has many meanings. Capital may be "social capital"; it may be "acquisitive capital." Further, capital may include land and other natural phenomena, as iron ore and other natural resources. We are by-passing those definitions.

We are using here the term *capital* in its narrower economic sense as the "produced means of production." This term will obviously exclude virgin land which is not *produced* by man, even though such land be as fertile as the deltas of the Euphrates and the Nile, or as fertile as the rolling plains of Iowa. *Produced* means fabricated *by man.* What is fabricated by man was not created by God. That is why no disrespect to God can remotely be inferred from the statement that God "failed" to create capital, or that God "omitted" capital from his creation.

Furthermore, capital as here defined, namely, the "produced means of production" excludes consumption goods (as a sandwich) already in consumers' possession and destined immediately to disappear or lose their existence. The "*means* of production" refers to *something useful for producing more goods.*

How can we make clear how important such capital, that is, the "produced means of production," can be for reducing work eventually? We believe this can be done best by quoting the greatest economist of the preceding generation, the Austrian economist and statesman, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk (1851-1914). We quote from his *Positive Theory of Capital,* originally published in German and of which the following is an as yet unpublished translation:

> A farmer needs and desires drinking water. There is a spring at some distance from his house. In order

to meet his requirements he may follow any one of several procedures. He may go to the spring and drink from his cupped hands. That is the most direct way. Satisfaction is the immediate consequence of his expenditure of labor. But it is inconvenient for our farmer must travel the distance to the spring as often during the day as he feels thirsty. Moreover it is inadequate, for this method never enables him to gather and store any considerable quantity such as is required for a variety of purposes. Then there is a second possibility. The farmer can hollow out a section of log, fashioning it into a bucket, and in it he can carry a full day's supply of water to his house all at once. The advantage is obvious, but to gain it he must go a considerable distance on a roundabout course. It takes a whole day's carving to hollow out the pail; to do the carving it is necessary first to fell a tree; to do the felling he must first procure or make himself an axe, and so forth. Finally, there is a third possibility for our farmer. Instead of felling one tree, he fells a number of them, hollows out the trunks of all of them, constructs a pipe line from them, and through it conducts an abundant stream of spring water right to his house. Clearly, the roundabout road from expenditure of labor to attainment of water has become considerably longer, but to make up for it, the road has led to a far more successful result. Now our farmer is entirely relieved of the task of plying his weary way from house to spring, burdened with the heavy bucket, and yet he has at all times a copious supply of absolutely fresh water right in the house.

Here is another example. I need quarried stone to build a dwelling, and a nearby cliffside offers stone of excellent quality. But how am I to get hold of some? The first method is to tug and pull with my bare hands until I break off whatever can be loosened by that method. It is the most direct way, but also the least productive. A second method is for me to attempt to procure some iron, fashion a chisel and a hammer and to belabor the hard rock with them. That is a roundabout road, but one which, as everyone knows, leads to a considerably better

result. Then there is a third way. I get hold of some iron, make a hammer and chisel, but use them only to drive holes into the cliffside. I next devote my efforts to procuring charcoal, sulphur and saltpeter and then to mixing gunpowder. Thereupon I pour the powder into the holes I bored before, and the ensuing explosion splits the rock. This is a still more roundabout road, but one which experience has shown to be at least as far superior to the second as the second is to the first.

* * *

The lesson to be drawn from ... these examples is quite clear. It is to the effect that roundabout methods are more fruitful than direct methods in the production of consumers' goods. And as a matter of fact, this greater fruitfulness manifests itself in two ways. Whenever a consumers' good can be produced either by direct or by indirect methods, superiority of the latter is demonstrated by the fact that the indirect method either turns out a greater quantity of product with the same quantity of labor or the same quantity of product with a smaller quantity of labor. In addition, the superiority appears in the fact that some consumers' goods cannot be produced at all, except by indirect methods. Here we might say the indirect is so much the better way that it is often the only way!

What is the *capital* in the foregoing illustrations? In the water-supply situation the *capital* is (1) the axe and the bucket; or (2) the axe and the wooden trough or pipes. In the second illustration *capital* is (1) the chisel and hammer; or (2) the boring equipment and the gunpowder.

Capital, as the term is here used, is not a natural product in its native state, as *created.* It is a natural thing as altered and utilized by man, man in turn using his brain and his brawn. What really happens is excellently described by Böhm-Bawerk:

It has already been stated that the origin of material goods [capital] is completely subject to the laws of nature. No material good can come into being unless

some conjunction of materials and forces is present which, through the operation of natural laws, leads to the inevitable consequence that exactly such and such a conformation of matter shall achieve existence. Regarded as a physical phenomenon, the formation of every good is a purely natural process. But not from man's point of view. For he has reason to emphasize one difference which, from the purely physical point of view, is nonexistent. One great class of useful forms of matter comes into existence without intervention on the part of man. From man's teleological [purposeful] viewpoint they constitute the fortuitous product of favorable conjunctions of matter with forces of nature. Examples are offered by fertile islands which form in the course of a river, by grass that grows on natural pasture land, by the berries and trees that grow in the forest, by natural deposits of valuable mineral ore. But even though pure chance does much for man, it fails by a wide margin to do enough. Nature, left to herself, behaves on a large scale in a manner that is comparable on a small scale to that of a person who, wishing to produce a definite mosaic pattern, were not to compose it deliberately, but were, instead, to keep on whirling 1,000 bits of colored stone at random in a kaleidoscope and then to wait until by chance the desired pattern emerged. In the infinitude of ways in which the active materials and forces may combine there are in both instances, untold possible associations but very few favorable ones. And in the untrammeled course of events those few occur too rarely for man, who is forced to rely on their eventuation for the satisfaction of his wants, to be content quietly to await those combinations. He therefore injects his own consciously purposeful efforts into the natural process and makes them a factor in it. He begins to *produce* the goods he needs.

What do we mean by *produce?* To create goods is of course not to bring into being materials that never existed before, and it is therefore not creation in the true sense of the word. It is only a conversion of indestructible

matter into more advantageous forms, and it can never be anything else. That truth has already been stated so often, that it might seem entirely unnecessary to revert to it here. There is more justification for the statement so often heard, that man, in producing goods, "controls" the forces of nature and "guides" them along lines advantageous to himself. But that statement, too is open to misinterpretation. It would be completely erroneous if it were made with the idea of conveying the thought that man could in any given instance substitute his sovereign will for such laws of nature as would otherwise apply. Whether or not the lord of creation [that is in this context, *man*] would have it so, not an atom of matter will, even for the tiniest moment, be induced by his powers to deviate a hair's breadth from the course which the unbreakable laws of nature prescribe. Man is cast in a far more modest rôle. Being himself a part of the natural world, he plays his part by combining his own natural forces with the nonpersonal forces of nature. And he does this in such manner that the collaboration of the united forces must, in conformity with natural laws, inevitably lead to a definite desired conformation of matter. The origination of goods thus remains a purely natural process, despite man's intervention. Man does not alter that process. He merely guides it to its consummation. He possesses the knowledge and ability skillfully to inject his own natural powers in such a way as to fill in the gaps which had previously existed in the chain of naturally requisite conditions on which the production of a good depends.

If we observe more closely how man assists the natural processes, we shall find that his sole but completely adequate activity lies in spatial control of matter. *The ability to move matter* is the key to all man's success in production, to all his mastery over nature and her forces. The simple explanation is that those forces reside in matter. By virtue of his physical powers man has the capacity to influence the place where that matter shall be, and he therefore also controls the place where its natural

powers shall be exercised. In general, that is tantamount to the capacity to dictate how and when they are to function. I say *how* a natural power shall function. Of course I concede that a one-pound weight functions no differently whether it is used as a paperweight on my desk, as the weight on a scale beam, or to hold down the safety valve of a steam engine. It merely exerts unceasingly the gravitational force with which its mass is endowed. But for the very reason that the manifestation of a given natural force is always the same, it is possible to have it function in various combinations and thus achieve extraordinarily varied results. Thus by adding an equal to an unequal quantity, we can at each new addition get a different result. Just so does the one-pound weight, which of itself always functions in exactly the same manner, serve differently in the different surroundings to which we transfer it. Thus in one case it pins a stack of papers to my desk, in another it indicates the weight of an object, in still another it regulates the steam pressure in a machine.

I also said *when* a natural power shall function. But this proposition too, must not be taken too literally. It is not to be interpreted as meaning that the forces of nature function intermittently and that through man's influence they are at times held in complete abeyance and at other times may be caused to resume their previous activity. The contrary is the case. The forces of nature are constantly in action, and to speak of an inactive natural force would be to record a contradiction in terms. But it is possible to effect a combination of several forces which will induce a temporary reciprocal obstruction of their functioning, so that the practical result is quiescence or, if not complete rest, merely so small a degree of activity that for man's purposes it may be ignored. This situation can be such that before any effective result can occur which affects man's interests there must be some very decided change in the combination of matter and forces. This suggests how man acquires control over the temporal point at which a given result appears. He need merely avail himself of his capacity for spatial transfer of matter

with sufficient skill to assemble, by way of preparation, the causative factors of the desired result *with one exception.* Just so long as that is missing, the conditions on which the desired effect depends remain unfulfilled, and the effect cannot, for the time being, ensue. Now at the proper moment he brings his last partial or contributing cause into place, the delayed activity is suddenly released, and the desired effect is garnered at the appropriate time.

In this manner the huntsman of old providentially introduced powder and ball into the barrel of his rifle, he supplied a percussion cap and drew back the hammer. Each one of these objects possessed powers peculiar to itself and had done so for a long time. The powder had for a long time harbored the molecular energy which would later eject the bullet from the rifle barrel. The barrel exercised then, just as it would later, its qualities of cohesion and resistance. The spring which would ultimately cause the hammer to make its forceful impact had long been driving and pushing toward release. But as yet the arrangement of the assembled forces was such that the result of their reciprocal influences was quiescence. There was then a slight pressure on the trigger, a gentle displacement of the combination, and at the moment when the huntsman had the fleeing quarry in his sights the gun went off.

The reflections which yield us some enlightenment concerning the sort of mastery that man enjoys over nature can also permit us some conclusions as to the extent and the narrow limits of that mastery. It is true, as we have seen, that man does have a certain power to set the forces of nature to work where, when and as he will. But that power is his only to the extent that he can control the material substance in which those forces reside. Now the bulk of that matter is often enormous, and consequently the mass of inert resistance to be overcome before any benefit can be derived, is frequently prodigious. At the same time the physical strength at man's disposal is of

only modest proportions, and indeed, often by comparison puny indeed. Conversely the matter to be dealt with is often too delicate for our clumsy hands to manipulate. How frequently do our purposes demand infinitely delicate adjustments of immeasurably minute particles and how awkward then is the "fistful of thumbs" that is asked to deal with molecules and atoms! How hopelessly incapable is the human hand of reproducing even one of those miraculously delicate cellular tissues, which nature conjures forth each day in myriad profusion in every flower and leaf! And so we are doubly inadequate. Our strength is not great enough to deal with the masses it should conquer, it is too gross for the fine texture of the materials we should handle dextrously.

Under these circumstances our capacity for production would be in sorry plight indeed, were it not for some very potent allies standing at the back of that twofold weakness. One of those allies is the human intellect. The mind has the ability to discover the causal relationship of things, and thus it can gain a clear understanding of the natural conditions and stipulations on which the origination of the desired goods depends. It is thus enabled to perceive where human force can be advantageously applied, and where not. And it teaches man therefore, to avoid fruitless expenditure of energy and to choose the most profitable lines of effort. And thus the human power it commands resembles a small but well-directed army which makes up through mobility, fine cohesiveness and energetic exploitation of its opportunities for what it lacks in numbers.

A second ally, a mighty help in the contest with nature, is *nature* herself. Scant and pitiful indeed would be our potentiality in the field of production, if we could not succeed in finding helpers among the powers of nature themselves, and thus to enlist forces in the camp of the enemy and to turn them against the natural forces that we have to overcome. However, this touches a point that is too significant in general, and too important for the

subject of our own research in particular, for me to be content with mere cursory mention of it.

Capital is the result of a combination of the *powers* in nature and the intellectual and physical *work* of man. Man's work directs nature so that nature becomes more productive and useful to man. Capital makes work easier. Capital produces more at less labor to man. Capital is merely *altered* nature, or *recombined* nature. Capital permits man to have earthly comfort, well-being, prosperity, riches. Where there is no capital, man is desperately poor. Where there is much capital man is prosperous—*provided another element, sin, violation of the social laws of God, has not been injected into the situation.*

Maybe the most informative sentences in the quotations from Böhm-Bawerk are these:

> Nature, left to herself, behaves on a large scale in a manner that is comparable on a small scale to that of a person, who, wishing to produce a definite mosaic pattern, were not to compose it deliberately, but were, instead, to keep on whirling 1,000 bits of colored stone at random in a kaleidoscope and then to wait until by chance the desired pattern emerged. In the infinitude of ways in which the active materials and forces may combine there are, in both instances, untold possible associations but very few favorable ones. And in the untrammeled course of events those few occur too rarely for man, who is forced to rely on their eventuation for the satisfaction of his wants, to be content quietly to await those combinations. He therefore injects his own consciously purposeful efforts into the natural process and makes them a factor in it. He begins to *produce* the goods he needs.

Nature is gloriously wonderful, but for man's welfare nature must be altered. The *materials* exist in nature. The *combinations* are not right for man's *specific* needs. Man must guide nature. What develops from that "guidance" is capital. The guidance which man introduces is purposeful, that is, has a teleological aspect. Purposeful man does not rely on chance—the whirling of the mosaic stones in nature; when could they possibly be ex-

pected to land right! He carefully places each mosaic stone in place *for his purpose.* The result, in this figure of speech, is *capital.*

Man in his original state was poor, because God had not created "capital." Man in his fallen state (of which more later) is poor because God has not created capital *and* because man regularly violates the social commandments (or laws) of God, thereby frustrating cooperation among men. Adam was originally poor because of creation, and because he lacked capital. His descendants today are less poor than Adam because they do have some capital (although not enough of it), but they have an offsetting item, namely, sin—violations of the commandments of God.

fn

(to be continued)

God Did Not Make The World Good, As Some People Understand "Good"

One way to interpret the statement that God created the world "good" is to take it to mean that *every* individual wish of *every* individual man in *every* age under *every* circumstance would instantly be supplied by God. *He* would *anticipate* every man's every wish. This is the assumption behind the *popular* understanding of the infralapsarian doctrine and the pre-Fall world.

Another way to interpret the statement that God created the world "good" is to take it to mean that there are general laws and provisions in nature which are of *general* use to man, *provided* that man works intelligently and physically to utilize those general laws by putting them into operation when they can (1) serve his specific purposes and (2) neutralize those general laws when they obstruct his specific purposes at a given time, and place and circumstance. See the earlier Böhm-Bowerk quotation, pages 278 ff.

Creation, in our opinion, was not created "good" in the sense that it would instantly satisfy every man's every whim. If we may be permitted the expression, it was "impossible" to create such a world, because then *general* laws of nature could not exist. In the naive sense referred to, every man could be a little tyrant about having every specific whim satisfied. What "nature" would

do when the whim of one man clashed with the whim of another man is not explained by those who hold to naive ideas of a "good" world.

One consequence of a sound notion of the character of creation is that people become aware that *work* was absolutely necessary in the original "good" world; such work must have consisted in adjusting the laws of nature to man's specific needs at that specific time.

At a given time and place a man may want water—as in a desert. To get water at such a place may mean a terrific amount of work, namely, to dig a very deep well. At another time a man may be living at the edge of a pure stream of water, and water is no problem to him and requires no work.

Solomon realized that "circumstances alter cases" and that individual, subjective *values* or purposes are in a constant state of flux. If values fluctuate, then nature would have to fluctuate with the variable subjective values men have, *if the world is to be good* in the sense that men would not have to work. In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Solomon wrote:

> For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; . . . a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; . . . a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; . . .

Solomon could hardly have been an infralapsarian. He realized *values* are infinitely variable. It is that infinite variability which cannot be satisfied by a world consisting of *general* laws. If one, in contrast, accepts the naive popular idea of how the original world was "good" then, instead of Adam having had to work to satisfy specific and changing needs, all he had to do was wish it, and presto, it came about.

Another derivation from naive ideas about the structure of the world is the idea that the "general" laws of creation, are an evidence of the *"common grace"* of God. In this instance words acquire a peculiar meaning. Obviously, "grace" here means natural laws *and nothing else.* There is, among some Christians constant

reference to general (common) natural laws as "grace," for example, that the sun shines and the rain falls on the good and evil alike. Of course it does. To have disputed it would have been ridiculous. The statement merely declares that *natural laws are general* and not specific. Likewise, moral laws, too, are general—universal and invariable in this life, affecting good and evil equally. Christ declares that it would be a sin to treat evil men on a different principle than good men. Your and my rule for doing good must be as beneficial—*and general*—to the evil as well as the good, as the rules of nature apply to the evil and the good.

Böhm-Bawerk in the quotation on pages 278 ff. shows how man *must* work to satisfy *specific* needs. That *work* was not initially because of sin, but because nature was only *generally* favorable—that is, "good"—and not *specifically* favorable.

If You Were Robinson Crusoe, What Would You Choose To Salvage?

The following is taken from the April-May 1957 *Case Eagle,* a publication of the J. I. Case Company, farm implement and industrial equipment manufacturer.

Let's be sure we always "TAKE THE AXE"

You're Ronnie Horvath, a 20th Century Robinson Crusoe. The only survivor of a shipwreck. The vessel is about to break up on the reef. You can carry something ashore; not much. At hand are canned foods, a radio, an axe, clothing.

What to take? The decision will mean life or death on the desert island. You could take the canned foods, but shortly you'd have nothing but empty cans. The portable radio—for the sound of human voices in your loneliness? But you can't build a shelter with rundown batteries. Clothing? It would soon rot away.

"You take the axe." Now you have a tool. With the axe you can build shelter—defend yourself—kill animals for food—chop fire wood. The axe multiplies your strength and skills. Man, by himself, is a pretty puny fellow. But give him an axe and he's a world-beater.

Better yet, give him an assembly line, machine tools, horsepower—and he'll provide the luxuries of peace, or, if need be, the sinews for defense.

There's a problem, though. No one gives away assembly lines or machine tools. And it takes a $12,000 investment in tools and materials for the average job. Where do these tools come from? From ordinary private citizens, who plunked their savings into shares of Company ownership—in hope of earning profit.

We in America have chosen to take the axe, the tool—on a vastly magnified scale. This choice—of tools to produce more—has helped us to live better. Better than any people, anywhere, at any time in history.

An axe is *capital.* God did not create *capital.* Man must "make" capital. That involves hard labor and temporary self-denial (there are exceptions). Men will pay that price for capital only when it is *for themselves.* Unless they get a modest reward (not the sole or total reward) they will not be sufficiently motivated to do what is necessary to accumulate capital. The "return" that men presently demand for private ownership is 3, 4 or 5 per cent annually of the market value of the capital. In Moses's time it was 5 to 7 times that.

If we are ever shipwrecked as Robinson Crusoe, we shall grab the "capital" and not the finished goods ready for consumption. fn

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